

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY ROME

TO AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

INFO SECSTATE WASHDC 1895

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, IN

SUBJECT: INDIAN AMBASSADOR PANT REPORTEDLY CRITICAL OF
MRS. GANDHI

REF: NEW DELHI 8676

1. EMBASSY HAS LOCATED ITALIAN NEWS AGENCY (ANSA) REPORTAGE OF JUNE 27 MEETING BETWEEN INDIAN AMBASSADOR PANT AND REPRESENTATIVES OF ITALIAN PACIFIST MOVEMENTS. THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE STORY MENTIONED IN REFTEL WAS DRAWN FROM THIS REPORT. THERE FOLLOWS AN INFORMAL EMBASSY TRANSLATION OF QUOTATIONS ATTRIBUTED TO AMBASSADOR PANT BY ANSA.

2. BEGIN QUOTE: I REALLY APPRECIATE YOUR INTEREST IN MY COUNTRY, AND THEREFORE I THANK YOU FOR COMINF. THE NEWS I READ IN THE NEWSPAPERS HAS DEEPLY SHOCKED ME TOO. INDIA HAS BEEN SUFFERING SERIOUS TENSIONS RECENTLY, BUT WITHOUT BEING THERE ONE CANNOT UNDERSTAND EXACTLY HOW SERIOUS THEY ARE. I HAVE BEEN VERY DISTURBED BY THE ARREST OF THE PACIFIST NARAYAN WHOM I KNOW PERSONALLY AND WITH WHOM I FOUGHT FOR INDIAN INDEPENDENCE; NARAYAN HAS ALWAYS BEEN A SPOKESMAN FOR THE INDIAN PEOPLE'S WORRIES. BUT YOU HAVE TO UNDERSTAND ALSO THAT SINCE INDEPENDENCE WE HAVE
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HAD TO FACE ENORMOUS PROBLEMS, FIRST OF ALL ECONOMIC

PROBLEMS. NEVERTHELESS, I COULD NOT IMAGINE EITHER, I MUST ADMIT, THE EVENTS WHICH THEY SAY HAVE OCCURRED IN INDIA. ON THE OTHER HAND, I CANNOT UNDERSTAND HOW MRS. INDIRA GANDHI, WHO HAS AN OVERWHELMING MAJORITY IN THE LOWER HOUSE, CAN HAVE UTILIZED OTHER SYSTEMS INSTEAD OF RESORTING TO THE MEANS SHE ENJOYS THANKS TO THIS MAJORITY.

3. I TALK AS A PEACE SEEKER AND NOT AS AMBASSADOR. WHEN I WAS YOUNG I WORKED FOR MAHATMA GANDHI, AND I CAN TELL YOU THAT WHAT IS HAPPENING IN INDIA HURTS ME AS MUCH AS YOU. HOWEVER, I ASSURE YOU THAT SO FAR I HAVE NOT RECEIVED ANY MESSAGES FROM THE INDIAN GOVERNMENT, AND THEREFORE, I HAVE NO DETAILS CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MY COUNTRY'S DOMESTIC SITUATION. I WILL SEND TO NEW DELHI IMMEDIATELY THE MESSAGE OF PROTEST OF THE ITALIAN PACIFISTS WHO FOLLOW GANDHI'S DOCTRINES. I FIGHT FOR PEACE TOO AND HOPE THAT A DEEPER AND DEEPER UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN OUT TWO PEOPLES CAN ORIGINATE FROM THIS MEETING.
END QUOTE

4. ON THE FOLLOWING DAY ANSA CARRIED THE FOLLOWING CLARIFICATION ISSUED BY EMBASSY FIRST SECRETARY GURCHARAN SINGH WHO PARTICIPATED AT THE AMBASSADOR'S MEETING WITH THE PACIFISTS. BEGIN QUOTE...(SINGH) DECLARED THAT AMBASSADOR PANT DID NOT RPT NOT PRO- NOUNCE THE FOLLOWING SENTENCE ATTRIBUTED TO HIM BY SOME FOREIGN AGENCIES INCLUDING THE JUNE 28-29 INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE: "I DO NOT UNDERSTAND HOW MRS. INDIRA GANDHI CAN HAVE CAUSED THESE SERIES OF EVENTS." END QTE.

5. COMMENT: FROM THE ANSA COVERAGE, IT IS UNCLEAR EXACTLY WHO PROVIDED THE AGENCY WITH THE QUOTES FROM THE AMBASSADOR, BUT IT WAS OBVIOUSLY ONE OF THE PACIFISTS WHO ATTENDED THE MEETING. A SOURCE IN THE FOREIGN MINISTRY, WHO KNOWS THE AMBASSADOR, BELIEVES HIM CAPABLE OF MAKING A STATEMENT OF THE TYPE ATTRIBUTED TO HIM. OUR SOURCE DESCRIBED THE AMBASSADOR AS AN EXTREMELY IDEALISTIC PERSON WHO IS NOT AFRAID OF EXPRESSING HIS VIEWS ON A SUBJECT OF THIS NATURE EVEN IF HE KNEW THAT IT WOULD COST HIM HIS POSITION. OUR SOURCE HAD NOT LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TALKED WITH THE AMBASSADOR SINCE THE MEETING. VOLPE

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